

Memo

To: Residents of Amherst
From: Dean Shankle, Amherst Town Administrator
Date: 05/13/2021

At their meeting on May 10, the Amherst Board of Selectmen voted to support the decision of the July 4th Committee to conduct a reverse parade on the 4th of July, rather than a typical parade in the village. They also supported the Committee's decision to forego the fireworks celebration on the 3rd of July.

The BOS clearly felt that the Committee members had done their due diligence before making the decisions. Part of this due diligence was to gather information from key Town staff, as the Committee mentioned in their statement, posted on their page on the Town Website:

<https://www.amherstnh.gov/home/news/4th-july-committee-statement> .

Since the committee did not go into any detail regarding what advice they have been given I thought the residents of the Town might be interested, so I asked the Police Chief and Fire Chief to provide me with a few bullet points that I could share with the public. Below are the responses I received.

From Police Chief Mark Reams:

- *Openness of fireworks and parade events present concerns regarding crowd control amid ongoing Covid anxiety.*
- *Differing viewpoints on mask use and social distancing measures hold real potential to incite conflict.*
- *Too many unknowns to be able to plan appropriately and ensure safe environment.*

Fire Chief Matthew Conley:

Bullet Points supporting the decision to not having the normal festivities in an effort to protect the public:

- *Regardless of the number of people who have been vaccinated, we cannot ask parade goers if they have been vaccinated, thus it would be unknown and potential for all to be at risk.*
- *The Universal Best Practice document from the Governor is in sync with the previous Safer at Home document with the difference being a “shall” vs “should.” Meaning social distancing and wearing face coverings is recommended, which would be very difficult in getting the public to do so.*
- *We are getting closer every week to being back to normal and now is not the time to rush and risk it by putting everyone together for the sake of what people want.*
- *Caution should be exercised whereas there are variants to COVID making it into the state.*
- *Lastly, and whereas the Emergency Services are a part of Town Government we have a responsibility to serve and protect our citizens. The decisions that are made based on the facts and information we have at the time to do so. Therefore, I support the decision made on how to celebrate Independence Day 2021.*

I hope this at least brings some clarity to the staff input regarding the 4th of July Committee’s decisions.